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1986 Dulbi Slough Goose Survey

by

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TITLE: 1986 Dulbi Slough Goose Survey

DATES: 7-8 July, 1986

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ABSTRACT: A survey of white-fronted geese (Anser albifrons) and Canada geese (Branta canadensis) was conducted on 69.0 miles of Dulbi Slough in Alaska. Seven hundred and eighty seven adult and 287 young white-fronted geese, 22 adult Canada geese, and one adult snow goose and new young snow geese (or possibly snow goose X white-fronted goose hybrids) were observed.

NARRATIVE:

Introduction: A survey of the goose populations on Dulbi Slough in the Koyukuk NWR in Alaska was conducted to develop trend data on those populations. Dulbi Slough provides important habitat in the Koyukuk NWR for two goose species, the white-fronted goose (Anser albifrons) and the Canada goose (Branta canadensis).

Study Area and Methods: Dulbi Slough was surveyed for 69.0 miles, starting at its northern most outlet from Boat Lake and continuing downstream to the mouth of Dulbi Slough. The river was surveyed using an Avon inflatable raft and a 6 h.p. Evinrude outboard motor. Access to and departure from the study area was made in a Cessna 180 equipped with floats. Observations were made using 10X binoculars. Goose brood species, size, and age class were recorded. Since combined broods were often observed, the mean hatching date was calculated for individuals instead of broods. Birds one year old and older were classified as adults. Incidental avian and mammalian species were also recorded.

Results and Discussion: Seven hundred and eighty seven adult and 287 young white-fronted geese, 22 adult Canada geese, one adult and two young snow goose, (or snow goose white-fronted goose hybrids) and 14 unidentified adult geese were observed. The young creme colored geese identified as snow geese young were observed in a group of 35 white-fronted goose young. The parents of the young are not known but at least one was assumed to be the adult snow goose that was observed near by.

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Most of the geese were observed in the upper parts of the slough. The upper 55% of the slough contained 93% of the adult and 90% of the young white-fronted geese and all of the Canada and snow geese observed.

The average brood size of white-fronted geese was 5.5 (Table 1). One hundred and twenty four of the white-fronted young were classified into age classes (Table 2). Most of the young, 78%, were in class IIA.

A total of 19 avian and three mammalian species were identified along Dulbi Slough (Table 3). Evidence for reproduction was found for 12 of the species. This is not a complete list of species along the Dulbi Slough. The list is mainly composed of species seen incidentally to the goose survey. Adequate time was not available to completely survey all avian and mammalian species along the river.

Management Recommendation: The combination of a rubber raft and a 6 h.p. outboard motor was too slow to overtake goose broods in a reasonable distance. Goose broods were able to outswim or outrun the raft and hide in the vegetation on the banks before an accurate age classification could be made. There were times when geese could not be overtaken and were pushed downstream for a mile before they would hide in the bank vegetation. A larger outboard motor or a faster boat is needed. A 9.9 h.p. motor and a rubber raft or a 6 h.p. motor and a square stern canoe would be fast enough.

Table 1. Waterfowl brood size on the Dulbi Slough during 7-8 July 1986

| Species | x | s | n | Range |
|-------------------|-----|------|----|-------|
| white-fron.goose | 5.5 | 3.82 | 8 | 2-13 |
| snow goose | 2 | - | 1 | - |
| mallard | 9.0 | 0.00 | 2 | - |
| northern pintail | 4.8 | 2.50 | 46 | 2-14 |
| American wigeon | 6.1 | 1.86 | 35 | 2-10 |
| northern shoveler | 7.0 | 2.83 | 2 | 5-9 |
| green-winged teal | 7.2 | 2.59 | 26 | 2-12 |

Table 2. Number and Age Class of waterfowl young classified on the Dulbi Slough during 7-8 July 1986.

| Species | IA | IB | IC | IIA | IIB | IIC | III |
|--------------------|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| white- fron. goose | 0 | 4 | 5 | 97 | 18 | 0 | 0 |
| mallard | 0 | 0 | 0 | 18 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| northern pintail | 10 | 21 | 0 | 67 | 48 | 54 | 8 |
| American wigeon | 68 | 86 | 27 | 28 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| northern shoveler | 0 | 5 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| green-winged teal | 86 | 15 | 0 | 53 | 15 | 0 | 0 |

Table 3. Avian and mammalian species observed on the Dulbi Slough 7-8 July 1986.

Canada goose (Branta canadensis)
white-fronted goose (Anser albifrons) a
snow goose (chen caerulescens) a
mallard (Anas platyrhynchos) a
northern pintail (Anas acuta) a
American wigeon (Anas americana) a
northern shoveler (Anas clypeata) a
green-winged teal (Anas crecca) a
northern harrier (Circus cyaneus)
bald eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus)
lesser yellowlegs (Tringa flavipes) a
spotted sandpiper (Actitis macularia)
mew gull (Larus canus) a
Bonaparte's gull (Larus philadelphia) a
Arctic tern (Sterna paradisaea)
belted king fisher (Ceryle alcyon)
bank swallow (Riparia riparia)
common raven (Corvus corax)
rusty blackbird (Euphagus carolinus)

Beaver (Castor canadensis)
black bear (Euarctos americanus) a
moose (Alces alces) a

a young observed.

